

## **Second meeting of the Victim Service Coordinating Council**

(March 2, 2007)

**Present:** Nancy Barton, Colleen Bozard, William Bilton, Hope Blackley, Marvin Bryant, Dottie Cronise, Barbara Grissom, Dean Kilpatrick, Surleaner Lakin, Ashlie Lancaster, BJ Nelson, Tricia Phaup, Bob Rightsell, Anne Wolf.

**Absent:** Vicki Bourus, Veronica Swain, Sandi Wofford (Dana will contact these persons).

Following a brief welcome, Dr. DeHart communication between meetings. She encouraged members to approach her or Pam with any emerging issues between meetings to discuss the issue and assure it is brought to all members of the group openly and in a manner that allows everyone a voice. This is intended to help track ideas and opinions throughout the decision-making process and to promote balanced communication.

Dr. DeHart summarized accomplishments of the last meeting, including established and potential Council goals. Established goals were those that held wide support from the group and which also seemed appropriate given requirements of the contract and input of consultants. These included:

- Recommending that the council continue in explicating the cast of characters including core members and stakeholders;
- Developing a strategic plan, including guiding statements and longer-term goals;
- And beginning within this project something that could breed a sense of short-term success, such as a pilot project, draft of simple legislative proposals, or first steps of a wide-consensus project.

Other potential goals required additional research and discussion. Dr. DeHart updated the group on information-gathering for each of these:

- Exploring VT's restitution-first model (Judy Rex of VT is sending materials);
- Examining ways to eradicate kinks in the compensation system;
- Examining issues in subgrantee funding (some info may be forthcoming from the Legislative Audit Council, and there has been extensive research by the 1999 Victim Service Advisory Council); related issues included finding a method to deal with reserve cash and developing greater accountability for earmarked funds;
- Examining process and feasibility of a safety-and-accountability audit (Dr. DeHart has a video and manual, and Lynn Hawkins may talk to the Council about a recent audit in Spartanburg); a related option included support for jurisdictional teams;
- Examining legislative issues such as drafting updated legislation or forming a legislative committee to research proposals;

- Developing standards to hold systems accountable to victims across jurisdictions and agencies (Dr. DeHart may share info from the National Victim Assistance Standards Consortium, and perhaps Vicki Bourus can discuss SCCADVASA's domestic violence and sexual assault program standards).

The Council was split into break-out groups based on past collaborative relationships and shared interests. These groups reviewed and prioritized potential goals and discussed ways to maintain their core values in the Council's activities.

Group One agreed among themselves that priorities were to address compensation issues (explore comp for additional services, expansion of the SANE program, and address problems with turnaround time or other aspects of reimbursement) and to perform a safety-and-accountability audit on a small-scale that may be replicated. The group could not develop consensus around issues such as centralized victim service funding or developing legislative changes. They felt the VT model may shed light on overhauling the compensation system. Group One described their core values were being survivor-focused, victim-centered, and sharing a non-profit perspective.

It was pointed out that some modifications had recently been implemented to streamline compensation and that results of this may be more evident in the near future. Problems with comp sometimes stem from determining eligibility and getting incident reports, which requires coordination at the local level. Certain aspects of compensation could be amenable to an efficacy audit, but other aspects may be changing or easily remedied. Stakeholders would need to include state hospital organizations, SLED, and others. It was noted that payment schedules and other aspects of compensation were set up years ago and that some needed changes were a matter of legislation. Olga Rosa and MUSC persons have recently proposed a bill around forensic interview monies. It was suggested that the Council might look into the entire forensic exam process including what evidence is needed, who is eligible, and what the funding should look like. Information from SANE nurses was characterized as better from a compensation perspective than information from persons or entities not specially trained in evidence collection.

Group Two suggested top priorities included drafting and reviewing legislation and developing standards across organizations. Regarding legislation, it was suggested that the subsections dealing with compensation posed limitations, and that updating could address current problems in the system such as rigid limits on counseling. The group requested further information on the VT model, and felt restitution might be another area of legislation for updating, as may be sections on 141 funds and accountability. Regarding standards, the group noted professionalization of the victim assistance field and the need for a statutory definition of a victim advocate. They also supported measures to ensure equitable treatment for victims across the state and across different levels of the criminal justice system. Stakeholders would need to include municipalities, counties, detention centers, and others involved in dispensing funds. They did discuss certification and continuing education requirements but didn't know how that would spin among nonprofits. They noted PCC's model of requiring a "Victimization 101" type

training and training for PTI personnel, paid for by the organization. Any certification should allow for differences in how advocates work, and there was some discussion of who would be a certifying entity. Group Two felt none of the proposed issues were “off limits” for the Council to address, but they did debate on whether safety-and-accountability audits were important. They didn’t discuss core values.

Group Three felt that some stakeholders needed to be added to the list, including DSS, SC DMH, and the faith community. The group first felt that legislation was not a priority, yet they repeatedly ended up identifying needed changes in the law throughout their discussions. Some key issues they would like to have addressed included that children in domestic-violence situations are not getting the services they need, as well as our system’s characterization of “good victims” and “bad perps” needs to be more flexible to get people the help that they need. They felt that changes in the comp system might be particularly opportune for the Council given active involvement and interest of Ashlie Lancaster in the Council. Issues to address might include exploring mental-health-treatment eligibility and flexibility in the law beyond the 4-year cut-off for filing (e.g., updating to allow some discretion). The group also felt a priority was development of standards and education, including working accountability concepts prior to employment, as in job descriptions and hiring. The group’s core values were characterized as ensuring victims get the services that they need, creating an atmosphere in which victims were willing to report, ensuring that victims expect and do get good services, as well as addressing cultural competence.

General discussion followed. Standards were not in conflict with all groups’ priorities, and nonprofits already have standards to some extent, although tackling something like this may be a longer-term goal. The group discussed presentations they like to see at the next meeting, which would be a half-day meeting involving reports and information. Presenters might include Perry from the Legislative Audit Council, Dr. DeHart and persons from SCCADVASA on standards, Lynn Hawkins on safety-and-accountability audits, and Dr. DeHart with any new information on VT’s restitution model.

It was suggested that the Council may want to make a formal response to the Legislative Audit Council report.

Additional stakeholders were suggested, including the Sheriffs’ Association and Police Chiefs’ Association.

Dana and Pam suggested that compensation might be a main goal given that it did cut across groups and included components of legislation and possibly efficacy audits. The Council opted for multiple more-specific subcommittees: compensation, standards and accountability of funds, and safety-and-accountability audit. Members expressed interest in group membership:

Comp: Surleaner, Bob, BJ, Dean, Dottie, Ashlie, Tricia.

Accountability & Standards: William, Surleaner, Bob, Hope, Anne, BJ, Dean, Barbara, Dottie, Ashlie, Marvin.

Safety & Accountability Audit: Marvin, Barbara, Tricia, Nancy, Colleen.

The Council broke into workgroups, with members choosing a group based on their priority interest for the day. It was noted that for committee meetings, members could belong to more than one group. Meeting dates for future work will be provided to Dana so that she can inform the Council to promote attendance by interested members.

The S&A Audit workgroup decided that they needed to define the outcome that they wanted to achieve. They suggested developing a general, standardized model that in the Council could then recommend to different groups across jurisdictions to improve systems. The model would include things like which players need to be involved, how to get them to the table, how to perform assessment, issues to address, suggestions for limiting victim fallout, and training needs. Their first step would be to look at what others had done. They asked that Dana pulled together materials including information from Lynne Hawkins, from Ellen Pence, from Graham Barnes, and from Quincy, MA. Their model would be general and workable across systems. They developed a timeline and suggested stakeholders that included law enforcement. They would look at how to disseminate the model statewide, including coordinating with the governor's Fatality Review Task Force. Legislative backing was mentioned as a way to encourage use of the model, as was distribution through associations (e.g., LEVAs, SCCADVAs).

The Compensation group discussed five issues which needed changing: number of mental health sessions, obsolete language, use of email/fax in filing, the 4-year filing limit, and forensic exam issues. The group actually drafted wording for proposed legislative changes. They would also contact Olga and try to gather additional information on the forensic exam issue. They suggested that they would put language into writing, put it to a vote by the Council, and submit the legislation.

The Standards group discussed developing a legal definition of an advocate. Their group primarily discussed one standard: providing standardized training to newly hired advocates within 6-12 months of the hire. This would be the core and would be a basic training course approved by some entity to be decided. There would also be a requirement for continuing education, but this would be more specialized. Grandfathering would be utilized for certification. The issue of revocation of certification was discussed, although it was noted that cases would have to be extreme to warrant revocation. They set a meeting day for their subcommittee for March 9 at 9 a.m. at 1401 Main St.

As an aside and longer-term goal for the Council, it was suggested that victim services develop one place to call for victims, something like the 211 system (or being tacked on to this).

The next meeting was set, tentatively, for the afternoon of Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of March from 1-4 p.m. The meeting will include presentations by guests as well as reports from workgroups regarding progress. Dana will confirm the time, date, and location.